

TOWN MANAGER EVALUATION FY2017

Select Board Member: ALISA V. BREWER

For the purposes of this document, the evaluation terms shall be defined as:

Commendable = Performance surpassing reasonable expectations

Satisfactory = Performance meeting reasonable expectations

Needs improvement = Performance below reasonable expectations; improvement likely

Unsatisfactory = Performance below reasonable expectations; improvement unlikely

Unable to judge = Insufficient information available for evaluation (Please explain)

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY	C o m m e n d a b l e	S a t i s f a c t o r y	N e e d s I m p r o v e m e n t	U n s a t i s f a c t o r y	U n a b l e t o J u d g e	COMMENTS
I. FISCAL MANAGEMENT						
1. Address the need for increased revenue by:						
a. Promoting efficiencies in Town structure and service delivery, including regionalization of services where appropriate, and maximizing effective use of CDBG, CPA, and other funds to offset allowed legal and administrative costs;		X				Good that the CPA budget includes \$3,500 to offset administrative costs; we have struggled for years as to how to predictably & transparently cover staff expenses without exposing ourselves too much when grants are not available or are decreased. Applying for the Community Compact program when his permanent predecessor did not is not “commendable” because doing so is well within the natural expectations for a professional Town Manager. Hoping to hear more soon about recurring revenues based on FY15 CIC grants with other communities (Northampton, West Springfield). Looking forward to hearing more about the repeatedly promised by the two previous permanent Town Managers Collins Center

						analysis of Amherst-Hadley-Pelham regional dispatch service located in current Amherst police department.
b. Negotiating contracts, including the collective bargaining contracts, that reflect the community's needs and priorities;	X					Effective work with the Insurance Advisory Committee to address another negative cash flow. Looking forward to more information about whether it's time to consider GIC again, or a broader insurance pool, or that we are better off to continue having these periodic gaps in our self insured program, since we also have an excellent history of low or no premium increases that is the envy of other towns. You completed the complex Comcast cable ten year license renewal after years of delays by your permanent predecessor & intermediate work by acting & temporary Town Managers. It appears negotiations with Amherst Media are moving forward. It is unclear why four Town Managers have been unable to get written legal clarification on why UMass cable is not in any way subject to similar rules.
c. Pursuing sustainable and appropriate development to increase the percentage of tax revenue generated from commercial property, and to reduce the burden on residential property owners.	X					Extensive work on Beacon project North Square at the Mill District. Working on medical marijuana host community agreements. Pursuit of additional MassWorks grant, this time for North Amherst intersection work.
2. Develop strategies for the long-term financial health of the Town:						
a. Developing strategies for handling long range post-employment benefits program (OPEB) obligations;		X				
b. Developing strategies to maintain an excellent bond rating;		X				
c. Working with the legislature to adopt policies in line with our goals and values.	X					Provides extensive support, including significant work by the Economic Development Director, on a variety of matters under consideration by the legislature or other agencies.
3. Prepare the annual budget in conformance with the Select Board Budget Policy Guidelines.		X				We have been requesting a path forward on four known major capital projects for years, & you worked with staff to provide those last fall. It turns out a number of Representative Town Meeting members as well as some of the larger community remains unaware of many of these details, so we look forward to finding new ways to

						communicate.
4. Effectively administer the adopted budget.		X				Quarterly reports continue to reflect when we are on target & the rare situations where adjustments need to be made. Many other municipalities *cannot* say their administrator has not ever come to them with a “budget hole” or significant unanticipated expense; we do now have a “budget hole” of over a quarter of a million dollars that this Town Manager inherited & we have not yet heard how it will actually be addressed.
II. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SELECT BOARD						
Maintain a professional and collaborative relationship with the Select Board by:						
1. Providing regular communications to the Select Board about matters relevant to their responsibilities and concerns, including changes and additions to Town programs and initiatives;			X			Appears to understand this longstanding area of concern (through two previous permanent Town Managers), & continues to improve, but still misses many opportunities. Project proposals are consistently incomplete when submitted to the Select Board for action, as they are missing costs, sources of funds, timeframe for completion, & documented vetting by related staff or committees (e.g, recent public way proposals for streetlights & signage; lack of DAAC engagement despite Select Board bringing it up every time; multiple staff involved in DPWG recommendations but none of them brought the business permit nor senior center permit to DPWG attention).
2. Responding to communications from members of the Select Board in a timely manner;			X			Frequently does not acknowledge email was received. Does respond promptly to texts.
3. Recognizing issues or changes with a direct or significant impact on the community, and that falls within the Select Board’s authority to provide feedback;		X				Seems to understand this goal more than two previous permanent Town Managers, yet misses many opportunities to receive feedback from chief elected officials when he does not need their permission. Select Board input before decisions are made provides a conduit for community values to the one person we five elected officials hire, as well as creating entirely appropriate political cover for administrative & staff actions. At the same time, provided tremendous support & advice to the Select Board regarding the Charter process & especially the many variations of the failed schools project.

4. Allowing the Select Board opportunity to provide feedback on changes to policy and practice, or new initiatives before implementation;			X			We asked repeatedly for several months for additional information on the grant for a recycling & solid waste/refuse enforcement position that will commit funds that have not been budgeted & serve a role that has not been done before, but never received such information & later informed a decision to go ahead had already been made. Never provided a wrap up to the three year shared funding with schools Amherst Together Media & Climate Communications Specialist position, nor any mention of next steps to “to try and bring together Town and School leaders, residents, and businesses committed to action steps to build greater equity and inclusiveness through community collaboration.”
5. Involving the Select Board in the determination of collective bargaining strategies for the current contract process, and keeping the Select Board updated on such progress;		X				
6. Informing the Select Board regarding litigation strategies and proposed settlements of litigation, and keeping the Select Board updated on the progress of litigation;		X				
7. Ensuring that all members of the Select Board are aware of anything significant before it appears in the media.			X			We are still surprised by media reports that we have not heard from the Town Manager first (e.g, Berkshire Gas/DPU, job posting for recycling & solid waste/refuse enforcement position). More frequent use of email updates from the Town Manager to the entire Select Board would likely solve this problem, which also occurred with the two previous permanent Town Managers & remains unacceptable. Verbal Town Manager reports that frequently run for over 20 minutes <i>before</i> any questions are asked by Select Board members is not an effective use of limited Select Board meeting time.

III. LONG RANGE PLANNING						
1.	Continuing to revise and update the 07-16-16 Facilities Profile (former goal known as “Building Assessment Report”). Provide at least a semi-annual review of the document with the Select Board to make them aware of changes or proposed changes in the buildings’ use, benefit or liability to the Town, and recommendations for retaining ownership.			X		When staffing challenges are sorted, we will need to see a plan for progress. The current version could inform JCPC, CPAC, CDBG, & other ongoing discussions & decisions but has not yet been deployed for these uses.
2.	Developing a policy for the disposition, reuse or disposal of surplus Town property (e.g., East Street School).			X		Long standing concern through two previous permanent Town Managers.
3.	Initiating and advocating for “green” efforts and programs, including progress on the installation of solar energy generating equipment on the landfill.			X		The statement “Difficulties emerged when the solar provided declared bankruptcy” is neither accurate nor complete.
4.	Supporting the preservation, maintenance and creation of housing that is safe, decent, and affordable for low- and moderate-income individuals and families, including:					
	a. Reviewing and assessing on an on-going basis the Town’s status on the State’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) and anticipating factors impacting our SHI percentage in the short-and long-term;		X			
	b. Reporting periodically on the operation of the seasonal shelter and recommending changes to any written agreements, as needed.		X			Looking forward to a written report on the past season soon.
5.	Periodically review and update a staffing plan that suggests the optimal number and types of positions in each department to best address current service levels and key needs, and serves as a framework for prioritizing recommendations for future hiring. Recommendations for new positions should include the full cost of each position, including post-employment and other benefits.			X		Looking forward to a written plan of action well prior to development of the FY19 budget, as this has never been done. Obviously we all know the fire staffing study is woefully overdue at it was intended to inform the FY18 budget.
6.	Improving public infrastructure and spaces:					
	a. Prioritizing and implementing repairs to sidewalks, multi-use paths, roadways, parking areas and intersections;		X			
	b. Reviewing and following up on actions recommended by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC);		X			Looking forward to a written plan of action on how to address requests from the community.
	c. Planning and implementing improvements to public areas, including parks, commons, and greenways so that they are safe,		X			Many exciting opportunities underway with North Common, Groff Park Splash Park, Dog Park planning, Wayfinding.

	attractive, and contribute to our quality of life;						
	d. Planning and implementing maintenance and improvements in the downtown and village centers, including working with Town staff and the Business Improvement District (BID) to assess the capital needs, to implement improvements, and to complete current projects (e.g., downtown way finding system).			X			Looking forward to a written plan of action.
	7. Planning adequate fee subsidies for LSSE programming, including the additional \$105,000 Community Services appropriated by Annual Town Meeting 2015.			X			This has traditionally been handed by staff with little public input & little to no discussion by Select Board. This spring the Select Board promised the community a September broader & deeper discussion of the extensive array of community services already in the budget as well as those to be considered in preparation of the FY19 budget.
	8. Planning for I-Net replacement in conformance with October 2016 Comcast contract.					X	Appears negotiations with Amherst Media are ongoing.
IV. STAFF AND PERSONNEL RELATIONS							
Manage Town staff and improve their effectiveness in delivering the services our community relies on:							
	1. Maintaining high staff morale by working toward a positive work place culture that includes diversity, civility, mentoring and receptivity to new ideas and innovations;		X				Some general areas of concern from the very few Staff Questionnaire forms we received.
	2. Increasing communication with staff at all levels, to inform, engage and solicit feedback, in particular developing a strategy and framework for accepting and responding to communications from staff. Also, encourage a similar framework of communication be implemented by all directors and department heads so that a consistent process is developed at all levels of Town government;			X			Looking forward to a written plan of action for a framework. Happy to see you attend so many events.
	3. Encouraging communication between departments to improve cooperation and coordination of services, and to foster pride in accomplishments across all areas of Town government;		X				There are a lot of meetings, but that doesn't necessarily provide results; appreciate the examples you provided.
	4. Recruiting, retaining, and assigning the best qualified personnel;		X				
	5. Modeling and fostering attitudes of helpfulness and courtesy toward the public;		X				Several staff serve as liaisons to various (& numerous) committees, boards, & commissions. When these staff receive their annual evaluations, it would be wise to

						solicit the opinions of those committee members (not just chairs) on their performance with a few simple questions, e.g., What is the most helpful thing x does? What do you wish x provided more of? Any other thoughts? If we aren't soliciting that information, we are not fairly considering a significant portion to their interaction with the public. Looking forward to hearing how you are taking this into account with your planned meetings with committee chair as it both a committee support & committee management issue <i>as well as</i> a staff evaluation issue.
6. Encouraging a workplace culture of improved service delivery;			X			Need more data on what this looks like (not just we talk about it a lot). In the past we've been told by your predecessors that both LSSE and DPW processes would be analyzed for service delivery but we've not seen any indication this has happened.
7. Providing adequate resources, including time, equipment, and professional development, for staff to be effective and successful;		X				Looking forward to a written report on opportunities available to those that are not department heads. Looking forward to an FY19 Budget Policy Guideline that you will provide an appropriate Minutes taker for Select Board meetings as having you take our Minutes is negatively impacting your ability to be effective and successful.
8. Providing periodic updates on progress of action steps identified in the July 2015 Human Resources Audit.			X			Looking forward to a written report outlining progress on actions steps identified in the July 2015 Human Resources Audit document.
V. COMMUNITY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND VOLUNTEER COMMITTEES, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS.						
1. Strengthening relationships with UMass, Amherst and Hampshire Colleges and engage them in:						
a. Mitigating the impacts of a significant student population on neighborhoods, on demand for public safety resources, on parking and traffic, and other municipal issues;			X			We need to hear more specifics.
b. Developing our partnership and strategies, through regular meetings, with Amherst College that reflect shared interests and concerns;			X			We need to hear more specifics.

c. Developing our partnership and strategies, through regular meetings, with Hampshire College that reflect shared interests and concerns;			X			We need to hear more specifics.
d. Pursuing actions of mutual benefit to the Town and the academic institutions including cooperative approaches that encourage “spin off” business development, the creative and innovation economies, and the arts and culture in Amherst;		X				UTAC is good but will need to see more from all three.
e. Working with the institutions to facilitate the development of new student housing off-campus and on-campus;			X			Getting us a copy of the UMass RFI after having one public meeting about the concept is a start.
f. Reporting periodically on the ongoing efforts and plans of the University for improving the campus and campus life to encourage a constructive relationship between the students and the Town, including the plans and projects of the University Town of Amherst Collaborative (UTAC);		X				
g. Reporting regularly on the UMass December 2015 Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA).			X			
2. Maintaining an awareness of developments and planning in nearby institutions and municipalities, and reporting on their activities that impact Amherst.		X				
3. Actively engage the community by providing information about Town successes and challenges.	X					Coffees & Road Shows have been well received. Many many people find you both accessible & engaging.

4. Developing a strategy for a clear and manageable process for responding to public inquiries and requests. Encouraging effective and responsive communication by all directors and department heads so that a consistent process is provided at all levels of Town government.			X			Looking forward to a written report outlining this strategy.
5. Ensuring that staff responds to committees, boards, and commissions that offer recommendations on plans or projects. In addition to acknowledging that input, follow up with action to be taken in response, or an explanation about why a recommendation may not be feasible.			X			Looking forward to a written report outlining this strategy.
6. Improving overall modernization and management of the volunteer committees, boards, and commissions system.			X			Looking forward to a plan for progress as your planned meetings with committee chairs unfold at the same time we are looking at technology supports for an unwieldy system.
GENERAL EXPECTATIONS						
Feel free to comment on strengths or weaknesses in any of the following areas: Professionalism Community spirit Leadership Defends conviction under pressure Enthusiasm Openness to differing views/new information Accessibility Resourcefulness Setting priorities Advocacy with State and Federal Government Communication style Crisis management Listening skills Responsiveness Public speaking Facilities management			Comments Entered a difficult situation with grace. Understood that many community members, staff, & elected officials were going to be comparing him to a popular permanent predecessor for whom many were still grieving. Recognized that everyone had developed a level of fatigue for change. Regularly publicly credits staff with accomplishments, although some Staff Questionnaires indicate staff wants to hear ? see? more of this. Listens carefully & is open to differing views & new information. Clearly enjoys being part of the Amherst community. Has made himself available to the public in a variety of settings & attended a large number of committee & board meetings as well as many community events. Much more aware than his two permanent predecessors of the delicate balance <i>within</i> the executive branch between the role of the chief elected officials (Select Board) & the chief administrative & fiscal officer (Town Manager). Like his permanent predecessor, has not yet accepted the seriousness of his failure to respond in a timely fashion -- even a simple acknowledgment of receipt -- to email queries from Select Board members, staff, & the wider community.			
OTHER COMMENTS						

If you are willing to share any additional information, insight, or experience relevant to this evaluation, please do so here.

This is an unusual Town Manager evaluation year for many reasons: it's the first Town Manager evaluation since August 2015 so the Select Board is out of practice; our current Town Manager is completing his first year with us; the current Select Board Chair became Chair 06-01-17 after being elected for the first time in 03-31-15; our community is considering a change in the form of government we've had since 1954 with a charter vote on

03-27-18; and my ability to provide my usual lengthy details is impacted by both the death of a close friend and being temporarily disabled by breaking a bone in my foot, both shortly before our evaluation due date.

This is the first evaluation of this Town Manager. All five Select Board members evaluating this Town Manager are the same five that hired this Town Manager.

The Town Manager's July 14, 2017 memo "FY17 Town Manager Performance Goals – Annual Report" contains much useful detailed information that is mostly not repeated here. See also:

- Town Manager's March 20, 2017 (updated April 4, 2017) "FY17 Town Manager Performance Goals – Six-Month Progress Report"
- Select Board's November 17, 2016 memo "FY17 Town Manager Performance Goals"
- Select Board's November 2, 2016 memo "FY18 Budget Policy Guidelines"

It is very important to note that rather than shortening the annual carefully considered list of Town Manager Performance Goals due to the newness of this Town Manager, we decided to proceed with the usual full set while also making clear our understanding that of course not everything could be completed, or even substantively addressed, in less than one year.

Soliciting input on the Town Manager's Evaluation:

This year, Staff Questionnaires were sent to (389) staff members [full-time and regular part-time, including grant funded, including library staff in FY17; (360) by email, plus (29) hardcopies], and (18) were returned to the Select Board. The Staff Questionnaire submission *rate* has dropped over the past six years, but that is likely partly due to increased *availability* of the forms to all levels of staff via email, as total staff have not increased at the rate reflected here:

FY11: 43/256 = 17%

FY12: 30/237 = 13%

FY13: 28/220 = 13%

FY14: 20/243 = 8% (or 24/243 = 10% if FY14 late counted in FY14)

FY15: 24/312 = 8% (or 28/312 = 9% if FY14 late counted in FY15)

FY16: (only temporary Town Manager, not this process)

FY17: 18/389 = 4.6% (library staff included beginning FY17)

Details for FY17: there were (360) recipient email addresses on the June 21, 2017 Select Board email to town staff re: Town Manager Evaluation that attached the Staff Questionnaire fillable draft 62017. Add (29) hard copies and there were (389) staff questionnaires distributed. The email included:

(68) at Town Hall

(59) at Library

(94) at Fire (career, call, student forces) (34) at Bangs
(36) at DPW (+ 29 hard copy)
(69) at Police

In response to soliciting comment from committees, boards, and commissions via email to all chairs and all staff liaisons, Town Meeting members via email to TMCC, and notices to the general public via the Town website, including subscribers to Town News alerts, we received (8) submissions:

FY11: (14) FY15: (23)
FY12: (34) FY16: (only acting, interim, and temporary Town Manager, not this process)
FY13: (9) FY17: (8)
FY14: (6)

Is the low rate of submission due to an increase in satisfaction, no compelling need to complain, or disengagement because participation seems futile?

As usual, many Staff Questionnaire responders did not provide comments to explain their less than Satisfactory ratings. A few responders are clearly disappointed and/or frustrated. One of my earliest suggestions after I was elected to the Select Board in 2007 was to include some sort of staff 360 component in the Town Manager's evaluation, as we'd begun to do while I was on the Amherst & Amherst Regional School Committees. We did in fact then adopt an instrument, which we have continued to tweak. Yet this FY17 evaluation is now my fifth to say: *The wide variation in responses - among a very limited number of responses -- causes me to wonder if a departmental rather than "at large" response might be solicited. I am uncomfortable with emphasizing this evaluation process challenge without providing a clear solution, yet continuing down this same variation of the 360 feedback path without some significant change in process does not seem particularly fruitful in either improving the Town Manager's performance or in improving our assessment of that performance.* We should explore this challenge in more depth after the results of the 03-27-18 charter vote are known.

It has been a good year. Most frustrations are around how long things take & the need for frequent & thorough communication.

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